

CALIFORNIA SYCAMORE



Scientific Name: *Platanus racemosa*

Form: Deciduous. This large tree may grow from 40 to 90 feet in height.

Trunk: It may reach 3 feet in diameter. The short trunk generally divides into two or more large trunks splitting into many branches. The bark is an attractive patchwork of white, tawny beige, pinkish gray and pale brown, with older bark becoming darker and peeling away.

Foliage: The large leaves may be up to 6 to 9" long and wide, deeply divided into 3 to 5 long pointed lobes. New leaves are bright translucent green and somewhat woolly. Dry, golden to orange red leaves drop in fall.

Flower/Fruit: The inflorescence is made up of a few spherical flower heads which develop into spherical fruit clusters. Seed balls in clusters of 2 to 7 (usually 3) dangle on a long stalk and are attractive on the tree.

Cultivars: Open crown of thick, spreading branches in native habitat. Fast growing. No significant pest problems.

Site Suitability: Widely planted as a landscape tree in public landscapes and private gardens.

Clearances: Suitable for parks at 8' to 12'. Good for street sides, medians and lawns.

Culture Considerations: New appreciation for how this tree shades sun in summer and lets sun through in winter has led to its use in green architecture and sustainable design. The aesthetics of its bark and its overall form also adds interest.

Species Characteristics: Known by several common names, including California Sycamore, Western Sycamore, California Plane Tree and Aliso (in Spanish). It is native to the southern coastal ranges of California and Baja California, northward to the central valley and Sierra Nevada foothills. It grows in riparian areas, canyons, floodplains, at springs and seeps, and along streams and rivers in several types of habitats. The California Sycamore is the dominant species in the globally and state endangered sycamore-alluvial woodland habitat.

The specimen on the campus of Stanford University has a trunk diameter of 10.5 feet.